

We are happy to present selected pages from our Parish Magazine.

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VIEW FROM THE VICARAGE

What an amazing start to the year we have had! Those who regularly read the opening page will have enjoyed a mixed bag of information from myself and the readers: Jean spoke of the joy many received from the ministry of that great evangelist Billy Graham and Anne helped us get a bigger picture of the Deanery as we were encouraged to do the "Tour de Deanery". It never ceases to amaze me how much there is to learn both outside but particularly inside the church environment.

I recently had the opportunity to visit our link parish of St Mark's in Shyira for 11 days, and what an experience it was.

We were welcomed in a way only the Rwandese can, love pouring out of every smile. This visit coincided with the end of the rainy season and boy, did it rain! On one occasion the bus we were travelling in became stuck in mud up to the wheel arches. As I spoke of my fear at having to go down the hill in the bus, if we ever got it out of the mud, Anthony, the Pastor, and Peace, his wife, looked at me and said, "Don't worry, you came up the hill to serve not to die, so God will make it OK."

This faith statement put me in my place but didn't take away all the fear. Much to my relief, we did indeed get the bus out of the mud and down the hill many times over the next few days. Perhaps I need a bit more of that African faith that says "just let go and let God."

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have worked so hard in the Tea Room since it opened this year, and for those in the Monday Evening Running Club and Rotary who have helped to get us back on our feet following the recent vandalism.

It is a shame when people cannot leave well alone but it is a sign of the affection felt for St Luke's by the community that when bad things happen, good people come forward. So once again THANKS to all the good people who work to make our corner of Formby what it is.

Harvie

FRIENDS REUNITED! (OUR VISIT TO SHYIRA, RWANDA)



A little welcoming committee!

Harvie and I were last minute additions to a trip that was already planning to visit Rwanda, comprising various medical professionals who were looking specifically at Palliative Care in the Shyira region, and members of St Philip's and St Paul's with Wesley church (PPW) Southport. We went along knowing very few of the people, a little apprehensive, and even more so once I realised that we were visiting during the 'rainy season' (I had already made several trips up the hill

on the scary road on previous visits and did not relish the thought of travelling in a largish coach of 20 people on the wet, muddy road, with its makeshift log bridges!).

The trip was co-ordinated by Dr Dominic Bray, from Queenscourt Hospice, in conjunction with Bishop Augustin, who arranged the programme for the 10 days that we were there. We arrived on the Thursday evening (17th May) and stayed at the Step Town Motel in Kigali, accessed by a very poor road full of pot holes and rocks, giving us our first 'African massage' as we were rocked around on the bus!

Friday: The morning was spent changing our money to Rwandan currency then a trip to the Kimironko market, where some of the group chose fabric and arranged for items of clothing to be made by some of the tailors working there. The market was colourful, crowded and very hot, surrounded by stalls with the 'green bananas' (Plantain - that would become a staple food for us during our stay), beans and vegetables. We then visited the Genocide Museum: Harvie and I opted not to go into the museum this time as we had already been on past occasions, but spent time in the gardens of the museum instead. It was then that we realised that being in Rwanda during the rainy season would allow us to encounter a somewhat different experience. Between April and July each year the Rwandans commemorate those lost during the Genocide and we witnessed several groups mourning and paying tribute in prayer and silence at the Memorials in the grounds.

Saturday: We travelled from Kigali to Shyira, gradually climbing higher until we reached "The Hill" – Shyira is a hill community, well used



Children at Shyira Primary School

to Missionaries and visitors from the West, and all the way up the hill we were greeted with smiles and waves from adults and children alike. Many of the children would run alongside the bus, with what seemed like inches between them and the steep drop down the hillside from the road, making the first-time visitors extremely concerned about their welfare. Harvie and I were already aware from previous visits that these children share the qualities of the mountain goats that they tend – sure footed and completely without fear! The wonderful welcome we received made me feel emotional and so

emotional and so grateful for the opportunity to revisit our friends in Shyira. I am always humbled by their openness and friendliness.

Sunday: Bishop Augustin had arranged for us to attend the enthronement of the new Bishop of Shyira in Musanze. This was a very grand affair and was held outside as the numbers attending would be far too many to squeeze into the cathedral. The service was expected to last 3 and half hours, but ended up lasting for 5 hours! Only the sermon was in English (as an American Episcopal Bishop preached) so the service was a challenge for us and we were very thankful when it came to its conclusion, though of course grateful for the hospitality extended to us.

Monday: There had been rather a lot of rain and we woke to discover that the wheels of the bus were jammed in thick mud in Pastor Anthony's garden. It took several men and women a good half hour to free the bus to allow us to make our way down the hill to visit the new Shyira Hospital in Vunga. Dr Theo gave us a tour of the hospital and shared with us his dreams of how the hospital will provide a good service to those living locally. Not having to climb the hill, or even worse, take stretchers up the hill with poorly people or women in labour will be so much better for the locals. The hospital was extremely well designed and practical, but is not yet functioning in all areas. We were particularly impressed at the use of drones to deliver blood from Kigali – such an efficient solution – and as if on cue, a drone made a delivery while we were in the grounds of the hospital! In the afternoon we spent some time looking at the old hospital buildings and CEEFOPS buildings (where in the past students with a less academic background could learn technical skills such as tailoring, car mechanics and woodwork). Harvie and I were very saddened to see these buildings no longer in use as the last time we had visited Shyira these were thriving.

Tuesday: The day began with the Bishop and Dominic leading a discussion about how a Palliative Care service may be developed on the Hill, using some of the buildings no longer in use. After hearing what the Bishop had to say the whole group were encouraged to offer ideas; these were then brought together into a presentation by Dominic and Dr Karen Groves (the Dr responsible for the creation of and running of Queenscourt Hospice in Southport). This was followed by a visit to the Primary School – always a highlight of any trip to Shyira. The children were presented with lots of toys and we had the opportunity to play with them on the grassed area outside. As always, the children were excitable, vocal and very keen to spend time with the visitors. Pastor Anthony's wife Peace had arranged for the Mother's Union to assemble at the church and we were able to distribute more gifts, as well as engage in some singing and dancing with the ladies.

Wednesday: The day began with a wonderful surprise as I was greeted at breakfast with a large birthday cake, brought up in the rain by Peace from Musanze! I was so touched at the trouble she had gone to for myself and another of our party who was celebrating a birthday. A few of us took the opportunity of the sunshine to walk down the hill to Vunga – still a treacherous journey but at least we had our feet on the ground, led by Pastor Anthony, who was a perfect gentleman guiding us on how to use our 'disposable sticks' as we picked our way down. We had refreshments at a café run by the 'Young Generation of Shyira' – a co-operative of young people who seem to be doing very well at their enterprise. The afternoon was spent at Group Scolaire secondary school where we were treated to some traditional dance and conversation, following the giving of more gifts in the form of sports equipment. In the evening Pastor Anthony had arranged for some of the church choirs to meet with us at the church and we enjoyed some fellowship together.

Thursday: After a whole night's rain during which most of us did not sleep as we lay imagining the state of the road down the hill, with a sense of hysteria and panic we made our way

back down the hill for the last time. We set off for Gisenyi where we met with Bishop Augustin. He was keen to take us to the border of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo to show us that things were not quite as volatile as the media would have us believe. It was fascinating to see the difference between the living accommodations either side of the border and highlighted how far Rwanda has come in its development.

Friday: Free time enabled us to explore Gisenyi a little more and we witnessed a silent procession in memory of the 100 days of the Genocide. Each district apparently commemorates on a different day of the 100 days. We then travelled back to Kigali, returning to the lovely Step Town Motel, managed by the very helpful John.

Saturday: This coincided with Omuganda – one day in the month it is expected that all adults give up a morning to do some work together for the community, such as working on the roads, cutting the grass etc. This has been something done for about 50 years but was a voluntary arrangement, but in the last 20 years, since the Genocide, it is enforced more strictly, being seen as a way of building community. A few of us joined in with the Omuganda and were welcomed by the locals. Seeing Harvie cutting some road side grass using a curved machete was not a sight I thought I would ever see, but we felt privileged to be involved and welcomed. A visit to the Inema Art Centre was a particular treat for me, giving an opportunity to see some of the art work being created in Rwanda and how art is being used as a way to help the younger people to express themselves. Lunch at the lovely 'German café' did not disappoint and then, following a brief visit to the market to collect the orders made the previous week, it was time to head to the airport.

I would encourage people to experience the hospitality of the Rwandan people. In our three trips we have felt safe, cared for and have found new things to discover. The people of Shyira Hill particularly have found a place in our hearts, and we continue to pray for them.

Sally Nicol

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SHYIRA - About a year ago a student at Range High School took part in a sponsored cycle ride from Manchester to Blackpool. Olivia raised money to buy tools and equipment for technical school students. We now have a picture of the presentation of sewing machines to tailoring students. And we apologise for not showing you the photo. For reasons beyond our control, we are still dealing with minimal colour. Normal service (or better!) will be resumed in September.

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SPONSORING PUPILS AT GROUPE SCOLAIRE SCHOOL, SHYIRA, RWANDA

Did you know that we have been sponsoring pupils since 2001? For quite a time they were all boarders – there are still some boarders but once these pupils have finished, there will be only day students as most schools in Rwanda are now officially day schools.

Sponsorship is very important for the poorest students – although secondary education is generally free, the families still have to pay for uniforms, health insurance and exam fees.

We don't manage a lot of communication between sponsors and students but this year we have already done one exchange of letters and there will be another opportunity to send letters over at the beginning of October.

At the moment we have 51 pupils being sponsored by 39 sponsors. We are asked to sponsor some pupils right from the first year but some families run into financial difficulties at a later stage. Fees are £72.50 for the year (£58 if you can claim Gift Aid) or £6.05 per month (£4.84with Gift Aid). If you are interested, please contact Margaret or Colin Cooke (tel 876325)

NOT THE RAIN IN SPAIN!

Well, what have we on the 15th July? The good people of Winchester will be casting a wary eye on the weather on that day to see if the ancient prophecy will come true.

St Swithun's Day, if thou dost rain,
For forty days it will remain;
St Swithun's Day, if thou be fair,
For forty days, 'twill rain na mair.'

And then I saw it! Not St Swithun's cathedral in Winchester but the Cathedral in Stavanger on the coast of Norway. There it was - smaller but just as beautiful as the English one with the same Logo writ large on the Notice Board. 'St Swithun's Cathedral.' 'What on earth is going on,' I said turning to Barbara. 'Cathedrals don't just fly and transplant themselves in other countries, especially Norway with its Viking hordes of yore.' So I went in to investigate.

But the legend first. Bishop Swithun made a request before he died on the 2nd July 862 AD. He asked that he might be buried outside his cathedral in Winchester where passers-by might tread on his grave. This was done and he was buried outside the north wall of the cathedral. When it was rebuilt a hundred years later his remains were translated inside the new building with great pomp on the 15th July 971 AD. We are told that many miracles were worked there but the shrine was destroyed by our old friend Henry V111 (of not so blessed memory!). The story goes that when he was re-buried before the high altar, the project had to be abandoned for forty days because of torrential rain. Hence the legend.

So last July in Stavanger I learned how the old boy had made it across the North Sea to the Land of the Midnight Sun. Stavanger was founded in 1125 AD and its cathedral built with its first bishop being Reinald from Winchester. He came across the North Sea with the gift of one of St Swithun's arms taken from the shrine. During the Reformation period Norway became Lutheran and the relics were removed and sent to Denmark.

But back to the legend. I am sorry to have to tell you that the meteorological assertions of the old rhyme do not correspond to the records of the Meteorological Office at Greenwich! So the accuracy of modern weather forecasting is really astonishing compared to days of old, when nature was the only indicator for the farmer as to what was going to happen at seed time and harvest. Agricultural rhymes have come down to us knowing nothing of the barometer and the radar scan. Even in my own day as a boy in Formby it took a Spitfire flying out of Woodvale a whole day to collect the weather data from the Atlantic coast of Ireland and bring it back. Now Barbara sits with her Ipad and BBC weather App and gives me chapter and verse and most of the time it's right!

Forecasting the weather was the same in biblical times. Even Jesus knew about the old ways of forecasting the weather in much the same way as a Galilean farmer would do. Listen, he has much to say.

The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked if he would show them a sign from heaven. He replied, 'In the evening you say, 'it will be fine; there is a red sky,' and in the morning, 'stormy weather today;' the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to read the face of the sky, but you cannot read the signs of the times.'

Jesus was absolutely right. We can get the weather right with the wonders of science at our fingertips but we often can't see the wood for the trees as to what God is doing in our world.

For Jesus the signs of the times that the leaders of his day just couldn't get were the events that were happening before their very eyes. The Kingdom of God was being ushered in around

the lakeside. The crippled, the blind and the dumb and many others were cured as sickness and disease fled from him. He had just fed five thousand by the lakeside in what was probably a miracle of sharing. And after all that, the religious leaders were still asking him for a sign. Hence his outburst of weather forecasting and his calling them an evil and unfaithful generation.

Jesus down by the lakeside tried to make the religious leaders of the day see what was happening. They could read the weather but not God at work. It's here that I take heart that there are still those today who take seriously Jesus' commandment to 'Love God and your neighbour as yourself.'. When that sign happens, then the Kingdom is as much present as it was down there in Galilee by the lakeside.

Jesus tried to make the religious leaders of the day see what was happening before their eyes. But they were blind to God breaking into people's lives. They could read the weather but not God at work. They tried to, 'lock out' Jesus and his followers from their ossified faith. In doing so they also 'locked out' the deaf who, cupping their hands over their ears because of the noise, could now hear! The blind who, open mouthed in astonishment, incredibly now could see! The cripples, now capering and splashing through the lake shallows in sheer joy, could walk! The miracle of sharing as five thousand people probably fed each other! And, says Jesus, 'You ask for a sign?'

Down there by the lake Jesus didn't ask what church people belonged to when he healed them. This is a real problem for the church because she has so often in the past and even today turned legions away - those who have sought forgiveness and healing and a sacramental life. Refusal comes because they haven't got the right religious credentials or any credentials at all! We are so good at 'locking out' and 'un-churching.'

So St Swithun and weather forecasting lead us on to ask what the signs of the times are for us today. I would suggest that we should look for 'Love of God and love of neighbour.' Jesus' New Commandment. Where they are, the Kingdom is not too far off!

Revd. Roy Baker

WHAT'S ON FOR THE ELDERLY IN JULY AND AUGUST

(A LISTED MONTHLY PROGRAMME OF EVENTS COMPILED IN AGREEMENT BY ST LUKE'S, ST PETER'S AND HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCHES, FORMBY METHODISTS AND FORMBY LIBRARY)

St Peter's promotes a positive approach to daily living with memory loss/dementia, offering an holistic programme helping carers to manage daily behaviour, access benefits/legal advice and other services, and promoting sustained wellbeing.

Singing For Fun is a free event hosted by St Peter's dementia support team and is held on the **first Monday of each month (excluding Bank Holidays) – Monday 2nd July, Monday 6th August, Monday 3rd September** - at The Bier House, St Peter's Church, Green Lane, Formby from **2.00-3.30pm**. This is especially suitable for older people, those suffering with memory loss and carers. It is a friendly light-hearted group singing favourites from the past and no special skills are required. Tea, coffee, cake are also included and all are welcome.

Local bus transport is easily accessible, the Formby Circular (F1, F2) stops right outside the Church, with other main bus routes stopping just a short walk away. Free parking is available.

At Easter, Harvest and Christmas, relaxing, shorter services are also held, and many of St Peter's church groups are dementia friendly too.

'**The Saturday Crew**' dates are **Saturday 7th July, Saturday 4th August, Saturday 1st September 10.30am – 12noon** (first Saturday of the month) also at the Bier House. This is a dementia friendly event (although all ages/abilities are welcome) involving practical tasks including covering shoeboxes, knitting puppets and hats, making and packing gift cards and anything else that can be managed, all in an atmosphere of fun with cake and coffee served. If you have a 'can do' approach to life and have spare time on the first Saturday morning of each month then please join the group as we wish to take on new activities to support projects in the parish. Ideal for anyone wishing to break the loneliness of a long weekend without company.

For further information on any of the above, please contact the **St Peter's Parish Office on 01704 871171, or email: stpetersformby@gmail.com (website: www.stpetersformby.co.uk).**

Please check with St Peter's for any change of dates and additional events.

Formby Library offer the following free events during July and August –

- (i) 'Of Dice and Men' – Board Games Group for Grown-ups, **Tuesday afternoons 2pm-4pm throughout July and August**. All welcome!
- (ii) Afternoon Tea **2pm-4pm Thursday 5th July and Thursday 2nd August** – 'coffee & friends; together, we make the perfect blend'.
- (iii) We have various Beehive related events throughout spring and summer including days where volunteers of any age can come to learn about the hive with our resident beekeeper, Andrea. Contacting her for further information is via the **Library number: 01704 874177**.

Formby Methodists hold a Memory Café (organised by the Alzheimer's Society) at the Methodist Church in Elbow Lane on the **second Thursday afternoon each month between 2.00-4.00pm (Thursday 12th July, Thursday 9th August)**.

St Luke's Lifeboat Tea Room opened for its 9th season on Friday 27th April and will be open **every Friday, Saturday and Bank Holiday Monday from 11.00am-4.00pm** throughout the spring and summer months until the end of August. Parking is usually accessible on St Luke's Church Road adjacent to the church. The Formby Circular bus (F3) also stops close by.

The Tea Room is enjoyed by so many people of all ages (and dogs too!), churchgoers and non-churchgoers and ideal for socialising and getting to know each other over freshly prepared hot and cold food in a beautiful and relaxing setting.

HOLIDAY AT HOME – for older people in Formby, Hightown and Ince Blundell runs from **Sunday 19th August to Sunday 1st September.**

Formby Befriending Scheme and Formby Luncheon Club throughout the year provide a hot meal and an opportunity for many older people in our community to socialise with other people. However, when it closes for two weeks in the 2nd half of August, many of those people are left without company and miss out on a hot, nutritious, home cooked meal.

There are many older people who are no longer able to enjoy a 'holiday experience' because of poor health or reduced mobility. The idea of '**Holiday from Home**' is that people can enjoy some of the fun and friendship of a holiday, while remaining home to sleep in their own beds each night.

We have put together a two-week programme of social activities, with support from Churches Together, GP Surgeries, Formby Library etc from 1st July. A variety of events will take place so that, just like on holiday, people can choose what they would like to attend. Many of the activities will provide food and entertainment. Some of the events will require pre-booking.

Transport will be available for less mobile people, and for some trips, but it is essential that this is pre-booked.

For information, or offers to help, please contact either:

Jean Jones Tel: 01704 635129 Email: 12jean@sky.com or

Winnie Pickering Tel: 07437 479417 Email: winepickering@btinternet.com

BOOKINGS will be taken 1st-31st July by Fiona Wood at Formby Luncheon Club Tel: 01704 877311 Email: info.formbycvs@talktalk.net

Formby Friends of the Alzheimer's Society – a very friendly group of people who meet on the first Saturday of the month in the Luncheon Club, Rosemary Lane, Formby from **10.30am – 12.30pm – Saturday 7th July and Saturday 4th August.** We give a warm welcome to those who are, or have ever, cared for someone with a dementia related condition, as well as the person they are caring for.

We have a varied programme over the year including film shows, trips out for afternoon tea, theatre trips, and Christmas meals and entertainment.

Why not come along for a cup of tea or coffee, make new friends and enjoy a chat.

For more information call either Vicky or Bob on **01704 873317.**

Ken Davies